

OMB BURDEN STATEMENT: According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0512. The time required to complete this information is estimated to average 60 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

Fiscal Years 2006 – 2008

Summer Food Service Program Rural Transportation Grants

Request for Application

The application deadline is June 15, 2005.

**An electronic version of this Request for Application is available at:
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/states/ruralgrants.html**

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Purpose | 3 |
| Who May Apply | 3 |
| Eligible Entities | |
| Letters of Commitment | |
| Number of Applications and Proposals | |
| Critical Dates for FY2006 | 5 |
| Funding and Duration | 5 |
| Use of Funding and Conditions | 6 |
| Allowable Use of Funds | |
| Unallowable Use of Funds | |
| Application Review and Grant Award Process | 7 |
| Screening and Review Process | |
| 1. Merit of Project Design | |
| 2. Organizational Experience and Management /Staff Capability | |
| 3. Budget Appropriateness and Economic Efficiency | |
| Selection of Grant Applications | |
| Determination of Award Amounts | |
| Award Notification and Issuance Of Funds | |
| Terms and Conditions | 9 |
| Record Keeping and Reporting Requirements | 10 |
| Application Procedures | 10 |
| Application Contents | |
| Application Guidelines | |
| Application Submission | |

Appendix 1, Model Proposal

PURPOSE

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to children in low-income areas, during long school vacations, when they do not have access to school lunch or breakfast. Although 16 million children depend on free and reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), only three million of these children receive meals during the summer months through the NSLP and SFSP.

The Food and Nutrition Service, USDA (FNS) is committed to improving access to the SFSP for children in needy areas. Participation is especially critical in rural areas, where the lack of transportation resources can be a significant obstacle that prevents the participation of organizations that could make nutritious SFSP meals available as part of constructive activities for children.

Section 116(d) of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 authorizes FNS to provide grants in the SFSP for innovative approaches for overcoming limited transportation resources in rural areas. In accordance with Chapter 7 Part 225 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the definition of rural used in this Request for Applications (RFA) means: (a) any area in a county which is not a part of a Metropolitan Statistical Area or (b) any "pocket" within a Metropolitan Statistical Area which, at the option of the State agency and with FNS concurrence, is determined to be geographically isolated from urban areas.

Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis through a maximum of five eligible State agencies that administer the SFSP, to not more than 60 eligible service institutions, to increase participation at congregate feeding sites through innovative approaches to limited transportation in rural areas.

Accordingly, this grant competition will support selected proposals that:

- clearly describe one or more innovative approaches that will be developed and implemented to overcome limited transportation resources in one or more rural service area(s);
- explain the direct, positive impact of the project on Program participation; and
- establish the credibility and capabilities of the service institution.

WHO MAY APPLY

Eligible Entities

The entities eligible to receive grants under this competition are the State agencies (called 'State agencies' throughout this Request for Application) that held Federal agreements on October 1, 2004 to administer the SFSP. Grant awards are contingent upon grantees holding a valid Federal agreement on October 1, 2005, and throughout the grant period, to receive grant assistance. Although this competition is limited to State agencies, grant funds will pass through State agencies to eligible service institutions to increase participation at congregate feeding sites through innovative approaches to limited transportation in rural areas.

Although previous participation is not a requirement for eligible service institutions, they must commit to participate in the SFSP as Program sponsors during the grant period to be eligible for sub-grants through a recipient State agency. These service institutions include:

- public and private nonprofit school food authorities;
- public and private nonprofit day camps;
- units of local, municipal, county or State government; and
- private, nonprofit organizations.

We have also enclosed an optional survey, which will assist the Federal Government in identifying the population of institutions that apply for Federal funds. Further, this optional survey enables USDA to ensure that all qualified applicants have an equal opportunity to compete for Federal funding. The survey only seeks information from private nonprofit organizations, i.e., not units of local, municipal, county or State government. USDA has not defined “faith-based organization.” Therefore, institutions are allowed to “self-declare” themselves as a faith-based organization.

We ask that each State agency incorporate this optional survey into its Rural Transportation Grant application. Upon receipt by FNS, completed surveys will be separated from the application. Information provided on the survey will not be used in any manner to make funding decisions and will not be included in the Federal grants database.

Letters of Intent

State agencies that are interested in this competition should submit a Letter of Intent, on or before March 15, 2005. This letter does not commit a State agency to apply; it will assist FNS in planning workload requirements for the selection, award and implementation of grants. Letters of Intent must include the date, State agency’s name and address, the name, title and telephone number of the State agency’s authorized representative, and an estimate of the number of service institutions that would be part of the State agency’s application. State agencies must mail or deliver letters of intent to:

Lynn Rodgers, Grants Management Officer
USDA, Food and Nutrition Service
Grants Management Division
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738
Alexandria, VA 22302

Letters of Commitment

Grants will be made on a competitive basis through a maximum of five State agencies, to not more than 60 eligible service institutions, to increase participation at congregate feeding sites in rural areas. The State agency must submit, with its application, a “letter of commitment” that affirms its dedication to the project, describes its role and responsibility in the project and identifies each institution for which a proposal has been included.

Additionally, each institution named in the application must submit a “letter of commitment” that describes its role in the project and the amount of time it intends to commit to the project, and an affirmation that it will cooperate with the State agency in implementing the project.

Number of Applications and Proposals

A State agency may only submit one application for consideration under this RFA. However, applications are not limited in the number of service institution proposals that may be included.

Individual proposals must be submitted for each service institution identified in a State agency's application. A model proposal is provided in *Appendix 1, Model Proposal*.

CRITICAL DATES

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| January 19, 2005 | Request for Applications announced by FNS |
| March 15, 2005 | Due date for State agencies' Letter of Intent to Submit an Application |
| June 15, 2005 | Due date for State agencies' applications |
| December 2005 | Awards to be announced |

FUNDING AND DURATION

This solicitation offers funding of SFSP Rural Transportation Grants for Fiscal Years 2006, 2007 and 2008, subject to the availability of funding. A maximum of \$2 million will be available for FY2006; a maximum of \$1 million will be available for each of FY2007 and FY2008. FNS will award the grants through a single competitive process. Service institutions may use the FY2006, FY2007 and FY2008 grant funds for the duration of the project period, ending September 30, 2008.

Funding of applications will be provided through the *Grant Award/Letter of Credit* process, in the same manner as other Program funds, upon receipt of a properly executed Grant Agreement and subject to the availability of funding. The submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

FNS may elect to fund a State agency's application in its entirety, may limit funding to specific service institution proposals contained in an application, or may negotiate grant requests to remain within appropriated funding. All SFSP Rural Transportation Grant funds must be obligated and all activities under the grant must be completed by September 30, 2008. Grant awards will be announced in December 2005.

FNS reserves the right to initiate a second competitive process if it receives few applications of technical merit through this RFA.

USE OF FUNDING AND CONDITIONS

All costs must be necessary and reasonable and are subject to review, in accordance with:

- Chapter 7, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 3016, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments;

- Office of Management and Budget Circular A-87, Attachment A, General Principles for Determining Allowable Costs;
- Office of Management and Budget Circular A-102, Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments; and
- Food and Nutrition Service Instruction 796-4, Financial Management – Summer Food Service Program for Children.

Subgrantees are also subject to the applicable costs principles and uniform administrative regulations, i.e., organizations with a nonprofit status must adhere to A-122, Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations and to OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

Allowable Use of Funds

Funds must be used by service institutions to increase participation at congregate feeding sites through innovative approaches to limited transportation in rural areas. Expenditures must conform to the project design and budget identified in the service institution's approved proposal. A service institution proposal may comprise, but is not limited to:

- contracting with local businesses, schools, or school districts for the use of vans or buses to transport children to congregate feeding sites;
- purchasing vehicles to transport children to congregate feeding sites (prorated based on the percentage of use directly associated with the Program);
- compensating employees for labor devoted specifically to preparing, delivering, or serving meals at, or transporting children to, congregate feeding sites;
- augmenting current transportation resources with refrigeration to enable the delivery of food to congregate feeding sites; or
- packaging for meals to enable delivery to congregate feeding sites.

Unallowable Use of Funds

Grants provided through this RFA are intended to increase participation at congregate feeding sites through innovative approaches to limited transportation in rural areas. Specifically, a project may not comprise:

- pre-award costs associated with the development of a grant application; or
- the costs of obtaining food.

Additionally, proposals predicated on a waiver of current SFSP regulations or policy, except those identified in this RFA, will not be selected for grants.

APPLICATION REVIEW AND GRANT AWARD PROCESS

Screening and Review Process

FNS will screen all applications that are received on, or before, the published deadline for submission, to ensure that all the required application components are included. Only the applications, and the proposals contained therein, that are complete and conform to the screening requirements of this RFA will be reviewed competitively, i.e. considered for an award.

Individual proposals must be submitted for each service institution identified in the State agency's application. A suggested model proposal is provided in *Appendix I, Model Proposal*. A panel comprising FNS Headquarters and Regional Office staff, and possibly one or more representatives of the child nutrition advocate community, will review and determine the technical merit of applications, and the individual proposals contained therein. The panel will numerically score each individual service institution proposal, contained in each State agency application, using the following evaluation criteria:

1. Merit of Project Design (40 points)

Analysis: The proposal clearly identifies a barrier to Program access related to limited transportation resources in rural areas, and proposes one or more approaches to overcoming the barrier. The proposal indicates substantial consideration and analysis of available transportation resources, relevant data and knowledge. (10 points)

Impact: The proposal identifies performance measures and goals related to Program participation. The impact of the proposal can be described in terms of the anticipated improvement in Program participation, or the magnitude of impact on a target population, e.g. the children of migrant parents, or the sustainability of meaningful and relevant results. (15 points)

Feasibility: The proposal describes the feasibility of improving participation in the Program in terms of: (a) the availability of resources, and (b) the project design; within current SFSP regulation, policy and practice, during the grant period. (15 points)

2. Organizational Experience and Management / Staff Capability (30 points)

Experience: The proposal describes each service institution's experience in and qualifications for administering Federal grants. The proposal describes the specific expertise of key personnel in management, administration and technical assistance, which qualifies them for their proposed roles. The proposal also provides a contingency plan for the loss of key personnel. (10 points)

Oversight: The proposal details effective and continuing oversight by qualified project managers, establishes the credibility and capabilities of the service institution and provides the means for successful communication with the State agency. (10 points)

Time Commitments: The proposal includes a discussion of the project timeline that allows sufficient time for proposed tasks and justifies the proposed time commitments of key personnel. (10 points)

3. Budget Appropriateness and Economic Efficiency (30 points)

Budget: The proposal includes a line item budget that describes the appropriate use of grant funds and justifies Program costs for each of Fiscal Years 2006, 2007 and 2008. (15 points)

Efficiency: The anticipated results identified in the proposal are commensurate with the cost of the project. (15 points)

Selection of Grant Applications

After the panel evaluates and scores each service institution's proposal, it will rank the proposals numerically, based on the scoring made by panel members.

The panel will then provide recommendations for funding to the grant selection official. The selection official may follow the panel's recommendation without amendment, or may consider other factors, e.g. geographic, demographic, or socioeconomic diversity, or agency priorities, in addition to the panel's recommendation. The selection official may also determine that, based on the subsequent scoring, few applications are of technical merit. As a result, FNS may not award grants or may commit less than the total amount established for this purpose. Additionally, FNS may select one or more lower ranked applications to diversify the focus area topics and regional representation. In general, the panel will consider awards based on proposals' rankings until available funds are committed. FNS does, however, reserve the right to fund applications out of rank order as discussed herein and reiterated in the section entitled, "*Determination of Award Amount*" below.

Once a grant is awarded, the grantee must sign a grant agreement, which will contain the terms and conditions of the grant, e.g. adherence to regulations, applicable cost principles and instructions provided in *Use of Funding and Conditions* of this announcement.

Determination of Award Amounts

If an application is selected and approved for funding, is realistically and appropriately budgeted, and has technical merit, the grant may be funded at the requested amount. However, FNS reserves the right to:

- fund applications outside of numerical ranking for the afore stated reasons;
- not fund an application based on a lack of merit; and
- award a grant at less than the total amount requested, if:
 - Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards;
 - it judges that one, or more proposals could be implemented with less funding; or
 - it elects to consider other factors, e.g. geographic, demographic, or socioeconomic diversity, agency priorities.

Award Notification and Issuance of Funds

FNS will notify selected State agencies in writing in December 2005 and issue funds as promptly as possible thereafter, subject to the availability of funding.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

For each project selected for funding, the applicant will be required to sign a grant agreement, which will contain the terms and conditions of the grant. Uniform administrative requirements for grants appear at 7 CFR 3015. Administrative requirements for grants to State and local governments appear at 7 CFR 3016. Subparts A-E "Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)" appear at 7 CFR 3017). Subparts F "Government-wide Requirements for Drug-free Workplace (Grants)" appear at 7 CFR 3021. All awards made in connection with this RFA will be subject to the following uniform administrative requirements and the related cost circulars:

- 7 CFR Part 3015: Uniform Federal Assistance Requirements;
- 7 CFR Part 3016: Uniform Federal Assistance Requirements for State and Local Governments;
- 7 CFR Part 3017: Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement);
- 7 CFR Part 3021: Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants)
- 7 CFR Part 3018: Restrictions on Lobbying
- OMB Cost Circular A-87, Costs for State and Local Governments

FNS will obtain assurance that applicants are neither suspended nor debarred prior to making an award. If chosen, the applicant must also agree to make a good faith effort, on a continuing basis, to maintain a drug-free workplace (including taking specific actions described at 7 CFR Sec. 3021.200 through 3021.230; and (B) identify all workplace locations where work under Federal award will be performed (7CFR sec. 3021.200). Since Federal entities will no longer collect a paper certification, this may include the following:

- notifying all sub-grantees and contractors of the Drug Free Workplace rules,
- making conforming changes to your internal procedures, directives, training materials, etc., and/or
- incorporating the new rules into your sub-grantee monitoring practices.

Applicants chosen for award will also be required to ensure that all sub-contractors and sub-grantees are neither excluded nor disqualified under the suspension and debarment rules found at 7 CFR sec. 3017.300 by doing any **one** of the following:

- reviewing the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) found at www.epls.gov, or
- collecting a certification that the entity is neither excluded nor disqualified. Since a Federal certification form is no longer available, the grantee or sub-grantee electing this method must devise it own. Including a clause to this effect in the sub-grant agreement and in any procurement

RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grantees will be required to submit annual Financial Status Reports (SF-269A), annual progress reports, and final reports at the conclusion of the grant period. Grantees will be required to submit an original and two copies of each report. FNS will provide a reporting schedule at the time of award.

Grantees must operate a financial management system that provides accurate, current and complete disclosure of the financial status of the project. Progress reports must provide a brief description of project activities conducted during the reporting period, major accomplishments including the dates of completion, a list and explanation of deviations from the proposed budget, difficulties encountered and solutions that were created, developed, or implemented, and a detailed listing of planned activities for the next quarter. The final report must include, at a minimum: a detailed explanation of the use of funds, progress made toward improving access to the Program, the impact of the project on participation in the Program and recommendations concerning project activities, future implications within the state and the transferability to other States.

Should there be any materials developed with funding from this grant the materials must be submitted to FNS in both portable document format (PDF) and printed copy at the end of the grant period. FNS reserves a royalty-free copyright of materials developed with this grant funding. However, this reservation does not imply endorsement or approval of material contents.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

The completed application package must be received at Food and Nutrition Service Headquarters, Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738, Alexandria, Virginia 22302–1594 on or before June 15, 2005. Applications will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) on this date. Applications may be personally delivered until this time, or mailed sufficiently in advance of the deadline to ensure timely receipt. If you opt to mail your application, we strongly suggest using a mail delivery service that guarantees delivery and allows you to track delivery to FNS. FNS will not accept applications sent by data fax or email. Late applications, and additions or revisions to an application after it is received will not be considered.

Application Contents

An original and two copies of each application must be submitted. The original must bear the actual signature of the State agency's authorized representative. Each application must contain the following elements in the order indicated:

1. Proposal Cover Letter—a letter that includes the date, State agency's name and address, the name, title and telephone number of the State agency's authorized representative, and a statement that affirms its dedication to the project, describe its role and responsibilities in the project, and identify each institution for which a proposal has been included.
2. Service Institutions' Proposals—for each service institution, a narrative, not to exceed three pages, that addresses each of the elements described in the Application Review and Grant Award Process section of this announcement. A suggested model proposal is provided in *Appendix 1, Model Proposal*.
3. Letters of Commitment—a letter of commitment must be submitted from each institution named in the proposal and must include: a description of the institution's role in the project, the amount of time it intends to commit to the project and an affirmation that it will cooperate with the grant applicant, i.e. State agency, in implementing the project.
4. Completed Standard Form 424--that has been signed by an Official of the organization applying for the grant who has authority to obligate the organization legally.
5. Standard Form 424(A)--Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs.
6. Standard Form 424(B), Assurances

Standard Forms 424, 424(A), and 424(B) can be downloaded from the US Office of Management and Budget website at: www.omb.gov.

Additionally, Federal Government awards applicants must now have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. If you were not notified, or if your agency has not yet obtained a number, you must contact Dun & Bradstreet at 1-800-234-3867 to register for a number. There is no charge to obtain a DUNS number. The DUNS number enables tracking and identifying applications for Federal assistance and must be included on all applications for Federal assistance. The DUNS number is to be provided on the Standard Form 424, "Application for Federal Assistance."

Application Guidelines

When preparing an application, State agencies must:

1. prepare the application on only one side of each page
2. use standard size, 8 ½" x 11" white paper
3. not include oversized or folded materials, or brochures, slides, film and video, or other promotional materials in the application
4. provide a typed application using 12 point Times New Roman font
5. number each page of the application sequentially throughout the package, starting with the *Abstracts of Each Individual Proposal*
6. staple the application in the upper left corner without binding the application

Proper preparation of applications will assist reviewers in evaluating the merits of each application in a systematic, consistent fashion.

Application Submission

Applicants must mail or deliver applications to:

Lynn Rodgers, Grants Management Officer
USDA, Food and Nutrition Service
Grants Management Division
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738
Alexandria, VA 22302

For all questions pertaining to this RFA, applicants may contact:

Lynn Rodgers
Phone: (703) 305-2760
Email: Lynn.Rodgers@fns.usda.gov